

The Woman's Page of The Times-Dispatch

Christmas Customs, Beliefs and Folklore

Scottish folk-lore has it that Christ was born at the hour of midnight on Christmas Eve, and that the miracle of turning water into wine was performed by him at the same hour. There is a belief still current in some parts of Germany that between eleven and twelve the night before Christmas water turns to wine; in other parts it is on Christmas night that this change is thought to take place.

This hour is also auspicious for many actions, and in some sections of Germany it was thought that if one would go to the cross-roads between eleven and twelve on Christmas Day, and listen, he would hear what most concerned him in the coming year. Another belief was that if one walked into the winter corn on Holy Christmas Eve, he would hear all that would happen in the village that year.

Christmas Eve, or Christmas, was thought to be the time when the oracles of the folk were in best working order, especially many of the processes by which maidens were wont to discover the color of their lover's hair, the beauty of his face and form, his trade and occupation, whether they should marry and how happy their married life was like to prove and how prosperous.

Among the superstitions connected with Christmas that have been gathered into a sheet by Grimm are the following:

If a shirt be spun, woven, and sewed by a maiden on Christmas Day, it will be proof against lead or steel.

If you are born at midnight-time on Christmas morning, you can see spirits.

If you burn elder on Christmas Eve, you will have revealed to you all the witches and sorcerers of the neighborhood.

If you steal hay the night before Christmas, and give the cattle some, they thrive, and you are not caught in any future thefts.

If you steal anything at Christmas without being caught, you can steal safely for a year.

If you eat a raw egg, fasting, on Christmas morning, you can carry heavy weights.

The crumbs saved up on three Christmas Eves are good to give as physic to one who is disappointed.

It is unlucky to carry anything forth from the house on Christmas morning until something has been brought in.

It is unlucky to give a neighbor a live coal to kindle a fire with on Christmas morning.

On Christmas Eve thrash the garden with a flail, with only your shirt on, and the grass will grow well next year.

The wet strawbands around the orchard trees on Christmas Eve and it will make them fruitful.

If the fire burns brightly on Christmas morning, it betokens prosperity during the year; if it smolders, adversity.

There, and many other practices, ceremonies, beliefs and superstitions, which may be read in others beside Grimm, who have written of Christmas, show the importance attached in the folk mind to the time of the birth of Christ, and how around it as a centre have fixed themselves hundreds of the rites and solemnities of passing generations, with its recognition of the kinship of all nature, out of which grew astrology, magic and other pseudo-sciences.

Ballads of Christmas Ghosts.
The beasts can talk in barn and byre
On Christmas Eve, old legends know:
As year by year the years roll by
We old folk silent then, I trow.
Such sights hath memory to show,
Such voices from the silence thrill,
Such shapes return with Christmas snow—
The ghosts we all can raise at will.

Oh, children of the village choir,
Your carols on the midnight throw;
Oh, bright across the mist and mire
Ye ruddy hearths of Christmas glow!
Beat back the dread, beat down the woe,
Let's cheerily descend the hill;
Be welcome all, to come or go,
The ghosts we all can raise at will.

ENVY.
Friend, sursum corda, soon or slow,
We part, like guests who've joyed
their fill;
Forget them not, nor mourn them so,
The ghosts we all can raise at will.
—Andrew Lang.

If I Were Only Rich.
"If only I were rich, sweetheart,"
says the young man in the shabby flat
overcoat before the blinding display
in the Sixth Avenue jeweler's window,
whence flashes forth splendor such as
never shone in Golconda's mine, "I'd
buy you everything you want in this
place! What I have got for you isn't
much, I hope you'll like it!"
We all say it.

Precarious. Five-Hundred-Dollars-a-
Year says it pitiously before the humble
display of boots and shoes masquerad-
ing as objects of festive beauty against
backgrounds of crimson crepe paper,
before invalids' chairs, before service-
able waiters, before sets of dining-
room furniture.

Poor. Five-Thousand-Dollars-a-Year
says it out before the inexpensive
runabout at the automobile show, be-
fore the Bolshara rug which the gentle-
man with the Armenian name and the
almost irresistible manner spreads out
in all its rosy, silken beauty; before
the leather-bound "Jane Austen," made
in the good old days when disintegrat-
ing paper, pale, blurred print impres-
sions and covers that could not bend
without an ominous cracking were
crimes.

Inadequate. Fifty-Thousand-a-Year
says the same thing before the alship,
perhaps, or the slim, graceful, polished
yacht or the pure-blooded Arabian
horse, which Madame Fifty-Thousand,
who has an educated taste in sports,
would dearly love.

—Anne O'Hagan, in New Idea Woman's
Magazine.

For the Green Indian Faddist.
For a near-by "Green Indian" faddist,
who had been very generous with her
roses in their season, she picked up
in a Chinese shop an odd, slab-sided
sandwich plate—to the delight of the
faddist. It was in the richly colored
enamels of that Oriental ware.

With slight variations, these plates
were all sold alike. On them was
first placed a lace paper dolly with a
holly design. Then she put slices of
her fruit, pound and orange cake; the
spaces filled in with jumbles and tiny,
crisp ginger-snaps; while the top was
decorated with stuffed dates, caramels
and little squares of waiking taffy
wrapped in paraffin paper, the edges
of which were caught together by
Christmas seals that were bright with
a red-inked Santa Claus.



—Le Bon Ton and Le Moniteur De La Mode Unites.

The Christmas Gifts That Make for Children's Pleasures

A number of Christmas gifts for children this year are calculated to give them profit with pleasure, and to serve a better purpose than a few hours' amusement.

These gifts are calculated to arouse an interest in arts and crafts work of various kinds and develop mechanical skill and tastes in the child.

There are painting books for children in flowers, landscapes, post cards, texts and mottoes. There are books about Dolly Darling and her pretty clothes showing the little doll whether how these should be cut and made; then there is a whole model menagerie in a book which has its pages arranged as cages and has animals appearing behind the bars. First-rate stories accompany the pictures and give an account of the habits of the various animals.

There are dainty little work boxes with bodkin and thimble and scissors and emery bag, embroidery needles and floss and, best of all, a grand mother's sampler, with a motto to be worked in cross-stitch started, and the plainest of directions as to how the work must be carried on. Little girls tired of play can beguile many hours beside the first seeing their sampler work grow under their fingers and taking useful lessons in the womanly art of needlework.

Bead work is altogether fascinating, and nothing can be more acceptable in the way of Christmas presents than an art and crafts box, which is filled with implements for various kinds of work accurately illustrated. This box is veritable treasure trove for little people and promises enough in the way of diversion to last throughout the whole year.

Then there is the simple typewriter on which a delighted little owner can learn the alphabet, finger the keys and imitate letters to all dear friends at will. Children operating it are absorbed for hours and it is one of the best things to develop the cleverness and ingenuity of girls and boys who have a mechanical turn of mind.

For a boy who has electrical aspirations, there is a wonderful trolley car painted white with blue sides, has lengthwise bench seats, and real sliding doors at either end. And best of all, there is a trolley overhead.

Another mechanical toy in which a small boy will take delight, is a motor wagon, with six bright tin cast wheels on a side, in an open wagon body having latched sides. The horse which draws this wagon has all of the appropriate harness.

Novelty boxes contain series of cut-out figures made to stand. Unlike ordinary toys, these pack compactly away into small boxes, though when opened out they will cover the nursery table. Among these boxes are the Motor Car, Model Farm, Circus, Flower Garden and Dolls Play Box.

Poinsettia Cotillion.

The invitations are issued on cards decorated with poinsettias stating the day and hour of the cotillion, with "Fancy Dress Cotillion" lettered beneath.

As this flower is very expensive, those possessing clever minds to design and deft fingers to execute, can at a very small outlay of funds, imitate nature's handwork and make masses of the scarlet blossoms from crepe paper, with the paper poinsettias combine holly, cedar and ferns, profusely decorating all of the rooms used for entertaining, arranging them in bowls and swinging bouquets from the ceiling tied with fluffy gauze bows. In addition to these have row after row of red paper Christmas bells across the hall, ball room and dining room; cover the light globes with crepe paper shades stamped with poinsettia blossoms.

Serve punch from a colonial table, the top and legs of it covered with ivy, cedar and holly, with an immense punch bowl in the centre wreathed with poinsettias, and a gauze scarf tied around the top with flowing ends.

The ball room should be very gay with bright lights, flowers and Christmas decorations. An immense bunch of mistletoe should hang from the centre of the ceiling, while red and green strips of bunting are stretched loosely from the corners of the ceiling and extend partly down the sides, ending with bells or gilt stars. Programs may be made of Kris Kringle faces, attached to Christmas ribbon, the favors may consist of bells, horns, stars, tiny trees, stuffed holly berries and gills have bent and filled with poinsettias.

The serving of a wonderful Tom Tucker pie will prove an interesting diversion; have an immense poinsettia for the top crust, leaving the space below for the mysterious contents—a gift for each guest. When the hostess gives the signal, a Santa Claus should bring this in on a sled, with tiny ribbons protruding from each slice, for each to draw.

The long table in the dining room is covered with a white cloth, and a beautifully decorated Christmas tree furnished with a twinkling centerpiece. Place the tree on a bed of snow made of cotton sprinkled with diamond dust. Above it, from the centre of the ceiling, suspend a large gilt star, from which stretch red streamers to the four corners of the table, above which, about two feet from the ceiling, the streamers are attached to baskets of moss filled with poinsettia blossoms and fastened by fine wires to the ceiling so they will swing above the heads of the guests. For place cards use tiny holly trees in diminutive earthen pots, painted green or wrapped with green paper, with the name of the guest lettered on the pot.

Vogue for Fur Trimming.
There is a decided vogue for fur trimmings on coats and suits, and only in the way of collars, revers and cuffs, but also including bands on the edges of the garment. Smart separate coats of kersey and broadcloth are so adorned, while the Russian blouse costume is naturally suited for fur trimming. Bands of astrakhan, caracul, mole skin and skunk are used to emphasize the lines of the Russian type of garment.

Fur trimming is very striking on the fashionable suits with their straight, scant skirts and short coats. The fur bands and revers relieve the severity of the costume, and such trimming is well adapted to the modish suitings of chevrot, tweed and broadcloth, while it is especially effective with the fashionable velvets, velveteens and corduroys, so popular just now for dress wear.

Among the novelties of the season are the combination sets of fur and velvet, which are having a good deal of vogue. Shawl collars of velvet are edged with fur, and corresponding muffs are equally combined with the fur and velvet and finished at either end with huge flowing ruffles of velvet.

Woman's Bank Opened in London

A bank run by women for women has been opened in London. It is a branch of Farrow's Bank. Men are excluded from being depositors, and the only man around the place is a messenger. Miss May Bateman, the manager, has done newspaper work as a war correspondent in South Africa, and has written several novels. She says that the bank has opened with nearly 500 clients, and that there is a prospect that women of all classes who have money to handle will patronize it. She believes it to be an unusual opportunity for women to learn business methods. It is doubtful if such an institution would be popular in the United States. The best banks here have made it easy for women to do business. They have their own waiting rooms and attendants, and their institutions will be welcomed by English women it is easy to believe. It is characteristic of them to have put an interesting as well as a capable woman at the head of their new venture.

PATENTS That Protect and Pay
for FREE SEARCH.
Books, Advice, Searches and FREE
Big List of Inventions Wanted
Watson E. Coleman, Pat. Lawyer, Washington, D.C.

The Woman of Common Sense Comfortable to Live With

In the wear and tear of everyday life, with its ups and downs, its checkered course of anxieties and cares, its joys and happiness, the woman who possesses and exercises the invaluable gift known as common sense is certainly a most comfortable woman to live with.

For so much uncommon sense is being put into play, so much which is outside of the sphere of sane normality and ordinary experience, that it is fall back upon common sense standards and ideas is extremely restful and refreshing.

This is one reason why men so often choose as their wives women who are in no sense remarkable for brilliancy, or wit or even beauty. A brilliant and witty member of the feminine sex may beguile a man's fancy for an hour or two, a beautiful woman may excite his admiration, but in a life companion, his friend, his presiding deity and the head of his household, he desires something more and vastly different.

The woman who possesses common sense is not an exacting woman. She is too practical to be jealous, or to arrogate as her inalienable right, every movement of her husband's time, every glance of his eye. In her presence he can relax and lay aside the mask which business or professional life interposes between a man and the outside world during his busy hours. His wife looks

well to his comfort and guards the interests which he commits to her care.

Her husband's heart and mind can rest safely in the knowledge that common sense—the most uncommon in the universe—will keep his wife from extravagances of speech or conduct, that in all matters where it is necessary for her to make a decision or express an opinion her action or expression will be governed by moderation and prudence.

Common sense saves a woman from following the eccentric whims and fads of fashion, and enables her to realize instinctively what is appropriate for her in so far as the appareling of herself is concerned.

She is a woman whose opinion is sought, because it is always sure to be worth having. She invites confidence unconsciously through her cheerful sympathetic outlook and her thoroughly well-balanced attitude.

In short, and again, the woman of common sense radiates comfortableness, the atmosphere around and about her is full of it, and puts all associated with her at ease and at their best.

YOUTH AND ITS ROSE-COLORED GLASSES

Youth is the pearl of womanhood.

Some of us in losing it have nothing left, or at least we make a very poor exchange.

It is difficult to see just what Mary sees in her beau. She wears rosyate glasses, and she sees things in a rosy light, and she makes no comparisons. Of course, we grow-up people make comparisons. Life drove the romance out of us with a good many hard knocks, and we see things differently. It is futile to try to have Mary see her beau as we see him. Mary can even weave a romance around an overcoat.

It has to be a fine, big overcoat so that he can open it full-out, and almost unfold her in it. What a suggestion of protection it gives to her! It is not difficult for Mary to build a hero into an overcoat. What! not if it have a soft, warm, velvet-lined pocket in the sleeves?

O, I was young once myself! It is not difficult to make a hero out of a man who has a certain rippling wave in his hair. But let me not seem personal. Jack has just such hair, but I don't mean him. And Jack is a wonderful football player. All the girls are wild about him. And of course he selected Mary. Who would not? Our priceless Mary, who doesn't know her own value, who hasn't the faintest suspicion of it!

Holiday Gift of Home-Made Goodies

A gracious homemaker of the finest type, living in a suburb, has revived a custom that her mother practiced many years ago in a town where every one knew every one else; and where to be neighbors meant more than living next door to a person whose name you might not know.

To each of several families living near, she sent, last Christmas morning, right after breakfast, a plate filled with "goodies" of her own making; and recipes that had been in her family for generations.

Knowing something of the fads and fancies of these neighbors, this sociable woman first proceeded to find plates which would have some meaning and interest for the recipients. These, she knew, must be of an inexpensive kind to be in good taste and to express her mere good-will.

Appropriate Plates.
For the neighbor who was the regent of a chapter of the D. A. R. she selected an "old blue" Staffordshire plate showing the picture, by Willard, of "The Spirit of '76." For the one who was a native of the Hub, and doted on old prints, she found one stamped, "Boston in 1768," depicting the primitive town.

Nothing, she thought, could be more appropriate for the newly engaged neighbor, in whose romance she felt such an interest, than one of the "John Alden and Priscilla" plates.